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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 002908

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SUBJECT: SE NATSIOS AND EU STRATEGIZE FOR UPCOMING DARFUR
PEACE TALKS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Laurence Wohlers for reason
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¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios and EU officials agreed to consider a select group of three or four Special Envoys for Sudan to bring the negotiating power of individual states to the upcoming Darfur peace talks in Libya and offer "carrots and sticks" that the UN does not have. The European Commission has offered the UN and AU a trust fund to assist in getting all the rebel leaders to the negotiating table, but the offer has not yet been accepted, EC officials said. Natsios again urged the EU to consider sanctions against Sudan, but was again told that there is no consensus among EU member states. End summary.

Darfur Peace Talks - Using Envoys to Leverage an Agreement

¶2. (C) SE Natsios and USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa Kate Almquist met with European Union officials September 12 to discuss potential strategies for supporting Darfur peace talks in Libya scheduled to begin Oct. 27. Both Natsios and the Europeans expressed concern about being marginalized during the UN-organized talks. The UN has informally proposed allowing only four outside representatives to attend the talks. Herve Delphin, a member of Commissioner Louis Michel's cabinet, suggested that Natsios and the other envoys to Sudan self-select a group of three or four to assist in negotiating with the rebel groups and the Government of Sudan. Natsios agreed, saying it is the U.S. and the EU, along with some select states, who can influence the outcome because they possess the appropriate "carrots and sticks." The UN, he said, does not. He noted that the North-South Sudan peace agreement was reached with the help of three central countries, the U.S., the UK, and Norway (and the EU and the Netherlands in the Troika-Plus context), and that perhaps a similar format would work in negotiating a Darfur peace agreement. There are approximately eight envoys from individual European states, plus one representing the EU as a whole, as well as envoys from the U.S., Canada, and China. Natsios agreed to consider a meeting of special envoys to discuss the issue prior to the September 21 contact group meeting in New York.

Getting rebels to the table

¶3. (C) The Europeans agreed with Natsios' assessment that the Sudanese government is currently divided and weak, and has lost much of its base in the North. Both U.S. and EU officials noted that Arabs are increasingly turning against the regime and taking up arms against it. Neither the U.S. nor the EU is particularly happy with the UN's decision to

hold the peace talks in Libya, but they agreed that the time may be right. They are concerned that Eritrea's decision to hold competing peace talks will be counterproductive. Natsios said it will be important for all sides to agree to a ceasefire during the talks. EU Special Envoy to Sudan Torben Brylle said that starting the negotiations will call the bluff of all those who say they are ready to find a solution to the conflict in Darfur. Delphin raised the question of whether rebel groups who initially boycott the talks will be able to join later if they change their minds or if they will be "named and shamed." Both the U.S. and the EU are worried about "spoilers" who will boycott the peace talks and then disparage them. Neither Natsios nor the EU officials he met believe that SLM leader Abdul Wahid will leave Paris to come to the talks. Natsios said he believes Abdul Wahid is a poor negotiator and is afraid of being unable to get favorable terms for his people. Jean-Christophe Belliard, Deputy of the Council Secretariat's Africa Unit, said Wahid has strong support in refugee camps among the Fur, who have vertical power structures and put great faith in a leader. Natsios suggested that the U.S. and EU work behind the scenes to cultivate an alternate leader such as a former Wali of Darfur living in London whom Natsios described as a principled man.

Offers of assistance ignored

14. (C) Gavin Evans, Sudan Desk Officer in the EC's DG-Development, said the European Commission has offered the UN and AU a trust fund to assist in bringing all the rebels to the table and to take away the excuse of financial limitations. But, he said, neither the AU nor the UN has yet taken up the EC on its offer. Natsios said he has had a similar experience with the U.S.'s offer of technical advisors, who would not have to be American, but would be

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funded by the USG. So far, the UN has not accepted the U.S. offer, he said.

EU reluctance on sanctions continues

15. (C) Natsios, as in his previous two visits to Brussels in the last eight months, strongly encouraged EU officials to consider sanctions. He said the U.S. sanctions are having economic and psychological effects on the Sudanese. In meetings with Council Secretariat and Commission officials, as well as Ambassadors to the Political Security Committee, Natsios urged the EU to at least do the necessary preparatory work so that it could quickly enact sanctions in the future if desired. Koen Vervaeke, Head of the Council Secretariat's Africa Unit, said the Africa Directors from EU member states met recently and there is still no consensus on sanctions. He said there is a reluctance on the part of some member states even to discuss the issue because they believe it would send the wrong message to the Government of Sudan.

Keeping Southern Sudan from seceding

16. (C) EU officials noted that the emphasis on Darfur often overshadows the important issue of Southern Sudan and its potential to secede from the rest of the country as it can under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Brylle met with Salva Kiir, President of Southern Sudan and Vice President of Sudan, in August, and said Kiir was frustrated and talking about war. Natsios said the dynamics between Kiir and his Vice President Riek Machar are troubling in that Kiir gives Machar too much power and that Machar, who has a PhD, looks down on Kiir. Both EU and U.S. officials noted that oil, and Chinese interests in particular, will play heavily in the South's decision about secession. Brylle said the oil coming from Southern Sudan is low quality. Belliard said a contact at Total told him oil reserves were being extracted and depleted quickly. The new Swedish PSC Ambassador Olaf Skoog was concerned to hear from Natsios that Tom Vraalsen is stepping down as head of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission that monitors CPA implementation.

Skoog said it should be an EU priority to see that the position is filled as quickly as possible. Roger Moore, Director for East Africa and the Horn of Africa at the EC's DG-Development, said the Commission is considering ways to redirect about 45 percent of its aid to Sudan to the Government of Southern Sudan. The Commission is legally obligated to work through Khartoum, but is seeking alternatives that would allow it to also work with the government in Juba, he said.

17. (U) Special Envoy Natsios did not have an opportunity to clear this report.

Murray

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